

**TITLE 1:** "Ask the Doctors"

**TITLE 2:**

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**AUTHOR/S:** Wayne Hening, MD, PhD

**KEYWORDS:**

- Sleep

**ABSTRACT OVERVIEW:** Wayne Hening answers one patient's question about whether there is a possible connection between the lack of sleep and developing polymyalgia rheumatica.

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**Q.** *Is there a possible connection between the lack of sleep and developing polymyalgia rheumatica (PMR)? I know PMR is an inflammation of the arteries and it does seem possible that insufficient rest could contribute to it. Over the past 30 or 40 years of inadequate sleep due to RLS, perhaps my body has reacted by developing PMR.*

**A.** PMR is with increasing age; this is a disease of maturity, not of youth. It is, as you point out, a disease of the immune system, like rheumatoid arthritis. Physicians believe that part of the cause of PRM may be related to the changes of the immune system with aging.



It is also well known that, at least in certain circumstances, sleep deprivation can lower the activity of the immune system. Since the true "causes" of PMR are unknown, it is at least possible that your sleep changes could have contributed to PMR. Unfortunately, at this stage of our understanding of sleep, the immune system, and PMR, a direct answer to your question is not possible.

While certain disorders such as kidney failure, iron deficiency, or nerve damage are clearly associated with RLS, they are generally not thought to cause RLS. (Many other disorders have been suggested as bringing on RLS, but the evidence for most of them is fairly weak.) Much less is known about disorders that might be caused by RLS or the related sleep deprivation. A bad case of RLS can cause much suffering and significantly interfere with quality of life, so RLS may cause psychologic difficulties or aggravate those already present. A number of epidemiologic studies have also shown associations between RLS and various psychologic disorders. The nature of this connection remains to be fully studied.

*Wayne Hening, MD, PhD*

*New York, NY*